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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

Friday, October 14, 1938.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "GREEN TOMATO DILLS". Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

--ooOoo--

Here it is mid-October, with winter just around the corner. Our summer gardens are beginning to take on that late autumn look.

One of these evenings we'll be carrying in the last of the green tomato crop, with perhaps a few sweet peppers and snap beans thrown on top of the basket.

The very sight of that basket of green tomatoes, would set grandmother to thinking about green tomato pickles. And lots of us today still make green tomato pickles by the recipes in the old-time cook books. But I wonder if you're familiar with green tomato dills.

Our grandmothers learned from years of costly experience just how to mix the brine that makes dill pickles so good. But modern homemakers have something even better than experience. Experts furnish them with printed rules that tell just how to make delicious green tomato dills at the very first try.

I've just been reading over these rules from the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

They remind me of the good old adage, that you're half through with a job, if you've made a good beginning.

It seems that a good beginning for a green tomato dill is a good brine flavored with plenty of the dill herb. Fermentation in this brine is just as much a part of the dill flavor as the dill herb itself. So be sure to use just the right proportions of salt and water, vinegar, and sugar for the sake of flavor as well as crispness in your pickles.

"Weigh the salt and measure all the ingredients for the brine carefully", says the report.

"Salt and vinegar are used to prevent spoilage, while the lactic acid bacteria are growing and helping to make flavor and crispness. The lactic bacteria feed on the sugar extracted from the green tomatoes, with a little extra sugar added to the brine. If the brine has too much salt, the pickles will not ferment rapidly. If there is too little salt, they will spoil.

"Standard proportions for dill pickle brine are salt, one and one-fourth pounds (that is 2 cups). Vinegar, one pint. Sugar, four tablesspoons. Water, two gallons. This quantity will make enough for about 12 pounds of green tomatoes."

(I'll repeat those proportions)



Now, a few other important points:

"Use only freshly picked green tomatoes for dilling. And have the tomatoes uniform in size and without blemishes."

It isn't necessary to have a crock any more to make dill pickles in. Glass jars will do just as well. Put the green tomatoes in 2-quart glass jars and leave them while they are fermenting and acquiring the dill flavor.

But if you have more than just a few green tomatoes to dill, you'll probably want to hold to the crock method.

But here's a word of warning about the glass jars. They must have glass tops. For the acid and salt in pickles corrode zinc caps and form a poisonous substance. And for storing also, be sure your pickle jars have glass tops."

Now back to the directions for packing the pickles.

"Put a layer of the dill herb and mixed pickling spices at the bottom of each 2-quart jar or in the crock. It's all a matter of taste just how much dill and spice you use. Either fresh or dried dill will work equally well. One "bunch" of the dill as the grocer sells it will probably be enough for a year's supply of dill pickles.

"Some pickle makers also add a little garlic to their green tomato dills for flavor. Garlic adds a zest that many pickle fanciers like. That again is all a matter of taste.

"After the dill and spice are in place, fill the containers with whole green tomatoes and add a second layer of dill and spices on top.

"If you use fruit jars, fill them to overflowing with the brine and partially seal the jars. The partial seal keeps air away from the tomatoes and helps prevent spoilage. Keep the fruit jars filled to the brim with brine.

If you use a crock, be sure that all the tomatoes are covered with two or more inches of the brine. Hold the tomatoes down with a clean, heavy board, or with an earthenware plate, with a clean stone on top. Remove any scum which forms on the surface of the brine. And keep the jars at ordinary room temperature - about 75 degrees Fahrenheit.

"In about two weeks the dilled tomatoes should be ready for use - crisp, spicy, well-flavored with dill, and clear, dark green throughout. There should be no white spots.

"Slice the tomatoes and pack them in sterilized quart jars. Add half a cup of fresh cider vinegar to each jar, and fill the jar with the dill brine which has been strained, boiled, and cooled.

"Dill pickles - and all others - should be sealed airtight in jars or bottles and stored in a cool, dry place. The old way of discarding an inch or two of spoiled pickles off the top of the barrel or crock to get at the good ones underneath is - well, it's old-fashioned to say the least."

That's all the pickling talk for today.

